

Message Text

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SUBJ: MBFR: US/SOVIET BILATERAL DISCUSSION OF JULY 7, 1978

REF: MBFR VIENNA 395

1. SUMMARY: US DEPREP HAD RETURN DISCUSSION WITH SOVIET
DEP REP SHUSTOV JULY 7. DISCUSSION FOCUSSED ON EASTERN JUNE 8
PROPOSALS. SHUSTOV AGAIN INDICATED THAT EAST MIGHT SHOW SOME
FLEXIBILITY WITH REGARD TO ITS PROPOSALS ON COLLECTIVE MANPOWER
CEILINGS AND ARMAMENT REDUCTIONS BY WESTERN EUROPEANS, AND,
LESS CLEARLY, AS REGARDS NUMBER OF SOVIET TANKS TO BE WITHDRAWN.
BUT HE SAID ANY FURTHER MOVEMENT BY SOVIETS WOULD BE CONDITIONAL
ON A PRIOR WESTERN MOVE. END SUMMARY

2. US DEP REP ASKED SHUSTOV WHETHER THE LIMITS ON ARMAMENTS
WHICH EAST WAS PROPOSING FOR THE WESTERN EUROPEANS IN PHASE II
WOULD BE NATIONAL OR COLLECTIVE LIMITS. SHUSTOV SAID EAST
HAD NOT CONSIDERED THE DETAILS OF THIS POINT BUT HAD ONLY
DECIDED IN PRINCIPLE THAT THERE SHOULD BE SUCH LIMITS. US
DEP REP POINTED OUT THAT NEW EASTERN APPROACH TO THE ISSUE OF
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ARMAMENT REDUCTIONS BY WESTERN EUROPEANS, INCLUDING THE EASTERN
PROPOSAL THAT SOVIETS RECEIVE CARTE BLANCHE TO WITHDRAW IN
PHASE II, COULD NOT BE CONSIDERED A SERIOUS APPROACH TO THIS
TOPIC. SHUSTOV REPLIED THAT IF WEST DID NOT LIKE THESE PROPOSALS,
THEY SHOULD MAKE A COUNTER-PROPOSAL OF THEIR OWN WHICH WOULD
TAKE INTO ACCOUNT EASTERN DESIRE TO AVOID A SITUATION WHERE
OVERALL NATO HOLDINGS OF ARMAMENTS REDUCED BY THE US COULD

INCREASE.

3. US DEP REP POINTED OUT SHORTCOMINGS OF EASTERN POSITION ON OPERATION OF EQUAL CEILINGS. THIS APPROACH COULD PREVENT WEST FROM MAINTAINING AGREED MAXIMUM LEVEL OF MANPOWER. SHUSTOV AGAIN SAID WEST SHOULD MAKE COUNTER-PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE EASTERN PROPOSALS. US DEP REP COMMENTED THAT WEST COULD NOT ACCEPT A SITUATION WHERE, IN ADDITION TO LARGE SOVIET FORCES IN USSR WHOSE SIZE WOULD NOT BE LIMITED, SOVIETS COULD RESTORE THEIR FORCES IN THE REDUCTION AREA TO PRE-REDUCTION LEVEL. DEP REP POINTED OUT HOW THIS COULD COME ABOUT THROUGH EAST'S NEW PROPOSALS OWING TO SOVIET CAPACITY TO CAUSE EASTERN EUROPEAN GOVERNMENTS TO REDUCE THEIR FORCE LEVELS TO ACCOMMODATE SOVIET INCREASE. SOVIETS WOULD HAVE TO DEVISE SOME PRACTICAL WAY OF GIVING WEST ASSURANCE THAT THIS WOULD NOT OCCUR. SHUSTOV SAID EAST WOULD BE PREPARED TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISMS FROM THE WEST ON ITS JULY 8 PROPOSALS. BUT WEST SHOULD BEAR IN MIND THAT SOVIET AUTHORITIES CATEGORICALLY REFUSED TO ACCEPT LIMITATIONS BY SOVIET FORCES IN THE VIENNA TALKS WHICH WOULD NOT APPLY TO OTHERS. WEST SHOULD ALSO BE AWARE THAT THERE WOULD HAVE TO BE A WESTERN RESPONSE BEFORE ANY FURTHER MODIFICATION OF THE EASTERN POSITION COULD BE EXPECTED. THIS TIT-FOR-TAT METHOD WAS PERHAPS NOT THE BEST WAY TO CONDUCT NEGOTIATIONS, BUT IT WAS A HARD POLITICAL FACT FOR THE VIENNA TALKS.

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4. SHUSTOV ASKED FOR DEP REP'S MORE GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF EASTERN PROPOSAL. US DEP REP SAID THE PROPOSAL WAS A SIGNIFICANT MOVE IN SEVERAL RESPECTS AND PERHAPS INDICATED A SOVIET DESIRE TO GO INTO MORE ACTIVE PHASE OF NEGOTIATION. BUT SEVERAL ASPECTS OF THE EASTERN POSITION INDICATED THAT THE SOVIET UNION WAS NOT YET READY FOR A DECISIVE PHASE OF NEGOTIATION MOVING TOWARD AGREEMENT IN THE NEAR FUTURE. THESE ELEMENTS INCLUDED THE EAST'S TREATMENT OF ARMAMENT REDUCTIONS BY THE WESTERN EUROPEANS, INCLUDING THE ALREADY MENTIONED PROVISION FOR PHASE II WITHDRAWAL AND ANNULMENT OF THE PHASE I AGREEMENT BY THE SOVIETS, AS WELL AS THE PROPOSAL FOR WITHDRAWAL OF ONLY 1,000 SOVIET TANKS AND TWO TO THREE DIVISIONS. THESE PROPOSALS HAD APPARENTLY BEEN DESIGNED AS THE BASIS FOR LENGTHY DISCUSSION. MOST IMPORTANT, THE SOVIETS HAD SHOWN NO INCLINATION TO MOVE ON THE DATA AND MANPOWER REDUCTION ISSUES. SINCE SOVIET AUTHORITIES MUST BY NOW HAVE CLEARLY REALIZED THAT SUBSTANTIALLY LARGER EASTERN MANPOWER REDUCTIONS WERE A REQUIREMENT FOR AN AGREEMENT, SOVIET FAILURE TO MOVE ON THIS POINT MEANT THAT SOVIET AUTHORITIES WERE NOT READY TO MOVE INTO A DECISIVE PHASE OF THE TALKS. THIS ASPECT OF THE SOVIET APPROACH GAVE DEP REP CONCERN BECAUSE TIME WAS NOT UNLIMITED. THE VIENNA NEGOTIATIONS WERE NOT IMMUNE TO OUTSIDE EVENTS. THE SOVIET UNION WAS

CONTINUING TO BUILD UP ITS FORCES IN THE AREA AND IN THE SOVIET UNION, AND PEOPLE IN THE WEST WERE GETTING INCREASINGLY WORRIED ABOUT THIS.

5. SHUSTOV ASKED DEP REP TO INTERPRET PASSING REMARK BY US REP IN JUNE 22 BILATERAL THAT WEST'S DECEMBER 1975 PROPOSAL HAD BEEN OFFERED IN RETURN FOR ELIMINATION BY THE EAST OF ITS MANPOWER SUPERIORITY AND COULD NOT BE HELD OPEN INDEFINITELY. US DEP REP SAID THE POINT WAS THE SAME AS THE ONE HE HAD JUST BEEN MAKING. IT SEEMED TO HIM THAT, AT SOME FUTURE POINT, CONCERN IN THE WEST ABOUT INCREASES IN SOVIET FORCES WOULD AFFECT THE WESTERN POSITION IN THE VIENNA TALKS. THEREFORE, TIME WAS NOT INDEFINITE FOR A MOVE FROM THE SOVIETS INDICATING WILLINGNESS TO TAKE SUBSTANTIALLY LARGER MANPOWER REDUCTIONS.

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6. SHUSTOV SAID, WHEN SOVIET DELEGATION HAD COMPARED REACTIONS OF WESTERN DELEGATIONS TO THE EAST'S JUNE 8 PROPOSALS, IT HAD BEEN CLEAR THAT REACTIONS OF THE US DELEGATION HAD BEEN THE MOST NEGATIVE. US DEP REP SAID SHUSTOV WAS AWARE US DELEGATION HAD FROM OUTSET FOCUSED ON THE CENTRAL ISSUE OF DATA AND THE SIZE OF EASTERN MANPOWER REDUCTIONS. THE DELEGATION HAD BEEN DISAPPOINTED, AS US REP HAD MADE CLEAR IN JUNE 22 BILATERAL DISCUSSION, WITH SOVIET FAILURE TO MOVE ON DATA. THIS WAS THE SAME POINT DEP REP WAS MAKING ON THE PRESENT OCCASION.

7. SHUSTOV SAID HE REALIZED THE EAST COULD NOT BE GIVEN ACCESS TO WEST'S INTELLIGENCE HOLDINGS ON EASTERN FORCES. ON THE OTHER HAND, FOR SECURITY REASONS, EAST'S MILITARY AUTHORITIES DID NOT WISH TO REVEAL ALL THE DETAILS OF EASTERN FORCES. THE RESULT WAS THAT THERE COULD IN PRACTICE BE NO DETAILED COMPARISON OF FIGURES WHICH MIGHT GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EASTERN AND WESTERN FIGURES. THE RESULT WAS AN IMPASSE FOR WHICH SHUSTOV COULD SEE NO SOLUTION. IT WOULD HAVE TO BE SOLVED BUT HE DID NOT KNOW HOW THIS COULD BE DONE. HE WAS GOING TO BE ASKED TO COMMENT ON THIS PROBLEM IN MOSCOW AND TO MAKE SUGGESTIONS AS TO HOW IT COULD BE TACKLED. BUT HE COULD THINK OF NONE. PERHAPS ONE COULD TOLERATE A CERTAIN MARGIN OF UNCERTAINTY. US DEP REP SAID HE DID NOT CONSIDER THAT A DIFFERENCE OF OVER 150,000 MEN COULD POSSIBLY QUALIFY AS A CERTAIN MARGIN OF UNCERTAINTY. SHUSTOV SAID, PERHAPS ONE SHOULD THINK ALONG THE LINES OF FOCUSING ON A NARROWER GROUP OF FORCES. AFTER ALL, PARTICIPANTS HAD BY AGREEMENT LEFT OUT THE NAVY. PERHAPS THEY COULD LEAVE OUT OTHER GROUPS LIKE PERSONNEL OF DEFENSE MINISTRIES FROM THE FORCES SUBJECT TO REDUCTIONS. US DEP REP SAID THE FIRST REQUIREMENT OF THE SITUATION WAS EAST/WEST AGREEMENT ON THE TOTAL NUMBER OF ALL ACTIVE DUTY PERSONNEL IN THE AREA.

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8. IN CONCLUDING REMARKS, SHUSTOV NON-COMMITTALLY INDICATED SOME INCLINATION TO CONSIDER FURTHER SOVIET TANK REDUCTIONS. HE ALSO COMMENTED BRIEFLY ON FRENCH PROPOSAL FOR A EUROPEAN DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE, STATING THAT SOVIETS WISHED TO GIVE PRIORITY TO THE VIENNA NEGOTIATIONS AND WOULD IN ANY EVENT NOT ACCEPT FRENCH CONCEPT OF COVERING THE WESTERN PART OF THE USSR IN SUCH A CONFERENCE.

9. COMMENT: SHUSTOV'S MENTION OF THE POSSIBILITY OF NARROWING THE SPECTRUM OF MILITARY MANPOWER TO BE CONSIDERED FOR REDUCTION IS BELIEVED THE FIRST OCCASION ON WHICH A SOVIET REPRESENTATIVE HAS MENTIONED SUCH A CONCEPT. THE CONTEXT OF THE REMARK MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE TO FORM A JUDGMENT AS TO WHETHER IT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS AN INDICATION THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE AN INTEREST IN MOVING IN THIS DIRECTION AND THUS IN BARGAINING ON THE SIZE OF ASYMMETRICAL EASTERN REDUCTIONS.DEAN

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